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French Drama of the 18th Century as a Mirror of the Growth of Liberalism

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FRENCH DRAMA OF THE 18th CENTURY AS A MIRROR OF THE GROWTH OF LIBERALISM

BY

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A. B. University of Illinois, 1914

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

IN FRENCH

IN

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

1915

1915
M61

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

June 4 1915

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY Olive Fiedelle Miller

ENTITLED French Drama of the 18th Century as a Mirror of the Growth of Liberalism

BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF Master of Arts

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*Required for doctor's degree but not for master's.

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FRENCH DRAMA OF THE 18th CENTURY AS A MIRROR OF THE GROWTH OF LIBERALISM.

I. Liberalism in Social Relations.

One of the most interesting features of the history of literature in France during the 18th century is the marked contrast which it shows to the 17th century in the fundamental doctrines and ideas which underlie it, and form a basis for the literary productions of the century. This change came but gradually and these new ideas secured a stronghold upon the nation only against much opposition, but the essential point is the fact that the change came, and left so marked an effect upon the literature of the century. Society, religion and politics were affected as well as the field of literary ideas. The 17th century had been fundamentally an aristocratic century, dominated by aristocratic ideals, where the part of the middle and lower classes had been very small. Especially insignificant had been their influence upon literature. Writers begin in the 18th century to address their appeal to the larger public, to the bourgeois class, interested in political and social questions, rather than to the nobility. The latter as a class were in no way interested in these things except to oppose them. The nobility were, very naturally, satisfied with conditions as they existed, a state in which all the

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advantages were on their side. Inversely they were, of course, opposed to a change in which they had nothing to gain and everything to lose, and which must necessarily mean a lessening of their position.

Literature in the 17th century was, therefore, largely a literature for art's sake, a mirror of the times it is true, in so far as the representation of the aristocratic class can be considered as a mirror of the times; but a literature having for its guiding purpose the setting forth of the aristocratic ideals and sentiments of the day in an elegant manner. In drama the classic idea of the distinctly separated genres of tragedy and comedy was closely followed by all authors. The characters represented in tragedy were of kingly or at least noble lineage, and it was written in lofty verse in accord with the classic model. The characters of comedy were of lower social caste, but comedies were written largely in verse, as was also much of the other literature of the century.

The 18th century brings a gradual change in this condition of affairs. Literature ceases to exist for its own sake, and becomes instead an instrument of propaganda, at first for freer and more liberal ideas on social, religious and political questions, and later for the theories of the leaders of the revolutionary movement. A large majority of the masterpieces of the century voice in some way the growing feeling of unrest and discontentment with existing conditions. Verse is not the proper medium of expressing these feelings, and it gave place to prose.

Drama took its place in this change from verse to prose, and the greater dramatic works of the century are in prose, this being increasingly true as the century advances.

During the first thirty years of the century the light and sometimes rather flippant comedies of such writers as Regnard, Dancourt, Marivaux and LeSage, serve as a means of setting forth the growing tendency toward liberalism in social matters. But as democratic ideas grow and the audience and reading public change in character, there is felt a need for a different kind of drama, a drama in which the thots, feelings and life of the bourgeois class shall be revealed. The classic drama has no interest for this class of people. The growing power of the bourgeois wearied of kings and emperors. The trials and tribulations of the aristocracy held no charm for them. They demanded their own portraits, and succeeded in obtaining this demand. Then too, there was a growth in the sense of human emotion, of the new pathos or sensibility, at this time. It was considered quite the proper thing to weep on all occasions. From these two factors, the growth of sensibility and the growth of the power of the bourgeoisie, results the fusion of the comedy and tragedy under the names of tragédie-bourgeoise and comédie-larmoyante, according to Brunetière.[1] Hence the very fact that such a new genre was created at this time, is in itself a manifestation of the growing power

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1. Brunetière. Les Epoques du Théâtre Français. Ch. XII, p. 283.

of liberalism. As is indicated by the names applied to this new genre of drama, it is a mixed type in which both the tragic and comic elements are given a large place.

But as Brunetiere says, "it is not a mere mixture, a mere alternation of comedy and tragedy, such as Voltaire and the romanticists tried to effect. It is an effort to raise the trials and tribulations of everyday citizens to the dignity of those of kings and emperors. Laughter is not intended."[1] Seriousness takes the place of the former mirthfulness and levity, and the chief object is:

"De prêcher la vertu, de décrier le vice."

The themes of this new "genre sérieux" are taken from the common homely affairs of the middle class. The audience is called upon to pity the results of civic distress, an unhappy marriage, the failure of husbands and parents to assume their proper responsibilities. It is also brot face to face with problems which concern the inequalities of social position, and the clash of classes. Such subjects as these tend to draw forth the emotion and sympathy of the spectators and give them cause for reflection. Family life is exalted, and honesty and personal purity are praised as the chief virtues of man.

This type of drama first came into existence with the English play by George Lillo, entitled The London Merchant or The History of George Barnwell, first acted in the year 1731. The subject treated is the power of temptation to ruin

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1. Brunetière - Les Epoques du Théâtre Français. p. 283.

young men. The praise of the merchant class in this play is very similar to that in Sedaine's masterpiece Le Philosophe sans le Savoir.

The leading names in the development of the tragédie-bourgeoise are Destouches in Le Philosophe Marie, La Force du Naturel, and Le Glorieux; Piron in Les Fils Ingrats, or L'École des Pères; Voltaire in Nanine and L'Enfant Prodigue; Nivelle de La Chaussée in practically all his comedies; Sedaine in Le Philosophe sans le savoir; Diderot in Le Fils Naturel, Le Père de Famille, and his adaptation of the English play by Moore - The Gamesters; Marivaux in La Mère Confidente; and Beaumarchais in Eugénie and Les Deux Amis.

This liberalizing tendency manifested itself first in the place where it would be most naturally expected, namely, in society. It was first concerned with the relation of individual members of society one with another, with the proper relationship of the members of the family and their duties to one another, and in the relation of the aristocratic and bourgeois classes. The next field into which this liberalistic spirit won its way was that of religion; while the last one to be affected perceptibly was that of law and politics. The latter field was deeply stirred up only in the last decade of the century, with the strengthening of the revolutionary spirit.

Let us first look into and point out the manner in which the developing democratic tendency in regard to

society in general, was showing itself in the early part of the century. It is true that most of the early 18th century comedy writers, (and it is mainly from the comedy and drama that my material has been obtained), were not writing with any serious moral or instructive purpose. They were striving primarily and almost wholly, to amuse, but nevertheless there is much in their work which may be considered not only as a mirror of the customs and usages of the time, but even as a satire against many of these practises, and those are passages which express very liberal views.

In the early part of the 18th century the first thing that strikes one as being a change from the preceding century is the rôle which the servant assumes. Formerly the "valet" and the "suivante" had acted as confidents and counsellors to their master and mistress, but now they are beginning to take the place of a friend and even an equal. They do not hesitate to blame and censure their superiors in their presence, to a much greater degree than they had previously dared to do even in their absence. It is true that in Molière the servant often assumes an air of impertinence and independence, but in such cases the author has given him this rôle with the desire and chief purpose of creating a comic or amusing scene. On the contrary, to an ever increasing degree as the 18th century advances, this touch in the servant's role is used to bring out his growing feeling of equality in rights with those above him in station. Altho' there is still a desire on the part of some authors, to create a comic effect, this is not the chief or main

purpose, and with the coming of the comédie-larmoyante it almost ceases to be even a part of the aim.

Let us first note a few examples which show the increasing privileges in speech which the servant class was assuming towards its superiors. In Le Joueur by Regnard, the latter seems surprised at the suggestion that his lady might reject his pretended love unless he ceased to squander all his money at cards: "vous êtes assez riche en bonne opinion, à ce qu'il me paraît."[1] Nérine, when she sees her mistress weakening in her good resolution to scorn Valere's pretensions, says to her:

"Je dis qu'en la mêlée vous avez moins de coeur qu'une poule mouillée,[2] and farther on in the play she adds: "Je suis fille d'honneur, je ne veux point qu'on dise - Que vous avez sous moi fait pareille sottise."[3]

In Le Distrait, also by Regnard, the valet speaks to his master in regard to his action upon a certain matter, in these words: "Vous raissonez parfois comme un sage de Grèce. Et d'autres fois aussi vos faits et vos raisons, Vous font croire échappé des Petites-Maisons."[4] and again he says:

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1. Regnard. Le Joueur. Act 1, Sc. 6.
2. Ibid. Act 2, Sc. 11.
3. Ibid. Act 5, Sc. 1.
4. Regnard. Le Distrait. Act 4, Sc. 7.

"Pour être bel esprit,
Il faut avec mépris écouter ce qu'on dit,
Rêver dans un fauteuil, répondre en coq-à-l'âne,
Et voir tous les mortels ainsi que des profanes.
Au suprême degré vous avez ce défaut
Et bien d'autres encore."[1]

In Les Folies Amoureuses and Le Légataire Universel by the same author we have still other examples of the impudence of servants. In the former play the servant is very defiant toward her master. She chides him for even thinking of marrying the young girl who is his ward, tells him he is mad to have planned such an imbecility, and refuses to help him in any way, toward the furtherance of his scheme for accomplishing this purpose.[2] He, afraid to dismiss her, because he fears that he may then secure a maid for his protegee who will be still more hostile to his plans, is forced to endure this impudence of the one already in his service.

Le Legs by Marivaux presents a maid whose rôle is decidedly that of an adviser. She assumes the responsibility of directing her lady's love affair, and takes the liberty of telling the marquis that his hopes are false since her mistress does not care for him. She tells the Countess of her conversation with this suitor and is quite surprised that it is not all approved and acquiesed in by her ladyship. She seems to think it quite fitting that she should be the judge

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1. Regnard. Le Distrait. Act 4, Sc. 7.
2. Regnard. Les Folies Amoureuses. Act 1, Sc. 3.

as to the proper husband for her lady.[1]

In Marivaux's Les Faussses Confidences" we have again the self-important servant girl, who believes all the men, even the hero, to be in love with her and proceeds to put on airs accordingly.

LeSage begins his best known play Turcaret with a heated argument between a baroness and her maid on the question of the acceptance of jewels and money from a wealthy bourgeois and the giving of it to a fickle chevalier, in order that he may pay his debts and live at his ease. The servant is quite frank and free in the expression of her views, speaking forth her mind in a manner very uncomplimentary to her mistress. Her commanding air draws from another servant the remark: "Comment donc! mais c'est une espèce de mère que cette servante-là."[2]

The plot of Le Sage's play - "Crispin rival de son maître," in itself shows the liberalizing tendency of the time in regard to the mingling of classes, by the fact that Crispin, a valet, assumes the name and dress of another man, and as such is the rival of his own master for the hand of a wealthy girl. In the 17th century with its strict observance of the rules of propriety, the servant could hardly have been given a rôle so far out of harmony with the prevailing ideas as to his proper place and duties. But in the 18th century the servant is looking out for his own welfare as much and even more than he is for that of his master, so

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1. Marivaux. Le Legs. Sc. 6.

2. Turcaret. Le Sage. Act. 1, Sc. 10.

it is not surprising that Crispin is here trying to carry out a scheme which if successful will better his condition at the expense of his master. If he had succeeded in his plan and finally had won the girl's hand, it would have been too democratic for the audience of this time, but since the master was finally victor the play was well accepted, and it serves to illustrate the fact that the people of the servant class were beginning to be considered as human beings with human desires, and were gaining ground in the matter of privileges allowed them in affairs in which their superiors in rank were concerned.

The change in ideas and attitude toward marriage and family relations is much more important and significant as an evidence of the growing spirit of liberalism than is that of the position of the servant whose station has always been considered somewhat inferior to that of the better educated and more financially independent class of people. It is more significant because proper marriage and family relations are necessary for a prosperous, contented, and well ordered nation. And this change in the 18th century toward saner and more liberal views in regard to such questions, was brought about and reflected in large measure by the dramatic writers of the century, especially the authors of the comédie-larmoyante and tragédie-bourgeoise. Marriages previous to this time had been made largely for position or wealth - marriages of "convenance" as they were called in France. The parties concerned had little or nothing to say about the matter. Children were

betrothed by their parents, and married when of proper age and even earlier, and when both families of the persons interested were willing, the inclination of the contracting parties being almost entirely disregarded.

Love was not the motive for marriage except in very rare cases, and even during the first years of the 18th century love was regarded as something very fickle and changeable, easily transferred from one object to another, and in no wise necessary to a marriage. It was thus represented in the principal comedies of Regnard and Dancourt altho' these comedies were intended largely as a means of ridiculing this much abused practise.

The popular view of marriage was well expressed by Regnard in his Ménechmes when he puts into the mouth of the servant girl these words:

"Est-ce donc pour s'aimer qu'on s'épouse à présent?
Cela fut bon du temps du monde adolescent,
Et j'en vois tous les jours qui ne font pas un crime
D'épouser sans amour et même sans estime.
Il faut se marier: vous êtes dans un temps
Où les appas flétris s'effacent pour longtemps.
Ce conseil bienfaisant que mon zèle vous donne,
Je voudrais l'appliquer à ma propre personne;
Et rester vieille fille est un mal plus affreux
Que tout ce que l'hymen a de plus dangereux."[1]

The bourgeois wish to marry into the nobility in order to secure position, and the nobility are willing to

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1. Regnard. Les Ménechmes. Act 5, Sc. 1.

marry into wealthy bourgeois families in order that they may pay their debts and live in ease. Each is envious of the other, the nobles desirous of the money of the merchant class, and the latter desiring the position of the former. In Le Chevalier à la mode by Dancourt, this state of things is well represented. Mme Patin is a wealthy woman of the middle class. She has been insulted, while riding, by the coachman of a marquise. Her maid Lisette tells her that it is not her person that the marquise has insulted, but her name, and advises her to change her name. The following dialogue ensues:

Mme de Patin - "J'y suis résolue, et j'enrage contre ma destinée, de ne m'avoir pas fait tout d'abord une femme de qualité.

Lisette - Eh! vous n'avez pas sujet de vous plaindre; et si vous n'êtes pas encor femme de qualité, vous êtez riche au moins; et comme vous savez, on achète facilement de la qualité avec de l'argent; mais la naissance ne donne pas toujours du bien.

Mme de Patin - Il n'importe; c'est toujours quelque chose de bien charmant qu' un grand nom. J'aimerais mieux être la marquise la plus endettée de tonte la cour, que de demeurer veuve du plus riche financier de France!"[1]

The other two important characters express practically the same views on the subject of marriage. M. Migaud who is of somewhat higher rank than is Mme Patin, altho he knows well

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1. Dancourt. Chevalier à la Mode. Act 1, Sc. 3.

her character and does not love her, expresses his willingness to endure her ill nature and coarseness in order to secure her income.[1] The chevalier, whom Mme Patin really desires to marry because of his social standing, says that if he marries this lady it will be her money that he is marrying, because he very much dislikes her character. He wishes to marry where he can get the most money.[2]

Some of the 18th century dramatists show their disapproval of such customs and try to make their audiences see these things from a different viewpoint, by placing in a ridiculous light and in embarrassing positions those characters in their plays who are motivated by such low moral standards. Thus we have seen Regnard and Dancourt doing and shall see still others coming later, do also. Other authors take their part in the development of higher ideals by representing people who are not grasping and selfish, or desirous of wealth and position, but who are willing to sacrifice these less essential and meaner ends for the sake of love, happiness, and duty. On account of the differences in rank, and the feeling between the classes, this was more or less difficult to do. Altho authors wished to represent love and parental kindness, they had to be very careful and moderate in introducing such sentiments into their works, as it was necessary that all productions, before being presented in the theater, should pass

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1. Dancourt. Chevalier à la Mode. Act 1. Sc. 5.
2. Ibid. Act 1. Sc. 7.

the board of censorship, or the person who exercised this right, as the case might be. This censure existed for the sole purpose of examining productions presented by the authors, and its duty was to eliminate any parts which might express views or ideas considered undesirable or too liberal in tendency. Thus it was often the case that dramatic pieces were either prohibited from being played or had to be remodeled before representation. An author must, therefore, be fairly conservative if he desired to produce his work on the stage. Bearing this in mind we can appreciate more fully the growth of the liberalizing spirit which was finding expression in the drama in no small measure.

In Le Jeu de l'Amour et du Hasard by Marivaux, which was presented in 1736, we have the father telling his daughter Silvia, that the young man to whom she is betrothed is coming to visit them, but that the marriage is to be consumated only on the consent of both young people. The father says: "Dorante vient pour t'épouser: dans le dernier voyage que je fis en province, j'arrêtai ce mariage-là avec son père, qui est mon intime et ancien ami; mais ce fut à condition que vous vous plairiez à tous deux, et que vous auriez entière liberte de vous expliquer là-dessus. Je te défends toute complaisance à mon regard: si Dorante ne te convient point, tu n'as qu'à le dire, et il repart, si tu ne lui convenais pas, il repart de même."[1]

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1. Marivaux. Le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard. Act 1, Sc. 2.

Both the young man and the girl disguise as their servants, and each ignorant of the other's identity and believing the other a servant and therefore inferior to himself in rank nevertheless falls in love. Dorante finally discloses his identity to Silvia, but she, in order to prove his love, keeps hers a secret. When he finally is sure that she loves him he desires her to become his wife even tho she be of low station, as he believes she is. Silvia says to him: "Quoi, vous m'épousez malgré ce que vous êtez, malgré la colère d'un père, malgré votre fortune?" and Dorante replies: "Mon père me pardonnera dès qu'il vous aura vue, ma fortune nous suffit à tous deux, et le mérite vaut bien la naissance."[1]

Destouches in his Le Glorieux first played in 1732 shows us the son of a wealthy bourgeois, who is in love with his sister's maid and wishes to marry her, but it is disclosed later, that she is of noble birth and therefore quite worthy of his name. The mere suggestion that a servant girl could be loved by, and be made the wife of a gentleman of some social standing was a decided innovation at this time, and it was quite essential that the girl be discovered to be of noble birth before the play ended, otherwise the audience would have been too much shocked. However, the importance of love in the selection of a life mate was here being held up and emphasized as an ideal, and the time is soon to follow when the noble may even marry the servant girl.

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1. Marivaux. Le Jeu de l'Amour et du Hasard. Act 3, Sc. 8

In face we have this very state of affairs in Voltaire's comedy Nanine or Le Préjugé Vaincu, which appeared in 1749. This is the story of a count's love for a servant maid, in which the prejudice of bith is entirely overcome, and love ends in a union of the two classes. The count thinks it no disgrace to be even the rival of his gardener, and justifies his love for Nanine in the following speech:

"Ma tendresse
Assurément n' est point une faiblesse.
Je l'idolâtre, il est vrai; mais mon coeur
Dans ses yeux seuls n'a point pris son ardeur.
Son caractère est fait pour plaire au sage;
Et sa belle âme a mon premier hommage:
Mais son état?.....elle est trop au-dessus;
Fût il plus bas, je l'en aimerais plus.
Mais puis-je enfin l'épouser? Oui, sans doute.
Pour être heureux qu' est-ce donc qu'il en coûte?
D'un monde vain dois-je craindre l'écueil,
Et de mon goût me priver par orgueil?
Mais la coutume?...Eh, bien! elle est cruelle;
Et la nature eut ses droits avant elle.
Eh quoi! rival de Blaise! Pourquoi non?
Blaise est un homme; il l'aime, il a raison.
Elle fera dans une paix profonde
Le bien d'un seul, et les désirs du monde.
Elle doit plaire aux jardiniers, aux rois;
Et mon bonheur justifiera mon choix."[1]

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1. Nanine. Act 1, Sc. 9.

In the last scene of the play the count tells his mother that he is determined to marry Nanine, and sums up in a few words the entire theme of the play, that a marriage should be made for worth and not for gold or birth.

"Ma mère, il s'agit d'etre heureux.
L'intérêt seul a fait cent mariages.
Nous avons vu les hommes les plus sages
Ne consulter que les moeurs et le bien;
Elle a les moeurs, il ne lui manque rien;
Et je ferai par goût et par justice
Ce qu'on a fait cent fois par avarice."[1]

The marquise then consents to her son's choice and all ends well. In this drama we have a democratic ideal carried out to its full extent. In former plays in which the nobleman has fallen in love with a servant girl she has turned out to be of noble descent, but here her station is unchanged, she remains a peasanttto the end. Lenient in his La Comédie en France au XVIII^e siècle says of Nanine: "Est une comédie essentiellement démocratique, remplie de maximes libérales et humanitaires, tout comme une tragédie philosophique. Et ces maximes, où se trouvent-elles? Peut-être dans la bouche des petits, des inférieurs, de ceux qui ont tout à gagner en réclamant l'égalité? Non, mais chez le Comte, chez la Marquise sa mère, chez ceux que leur éducation et leur préjugés doivent en écarter le plus."[2]

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1. Voltaire. Nanine. Act 3, Sc. 8.
2. Lenient. La Comédie en France au XVIII^e siècle. Paris 1888, Vol. II, p. 58-59.

In the 18th century men of noble birth began to lose the place of superiority above the middle class which they had held formerly, due to the privileges which had been theirs as a matter of course. People were now beginning to realize that it took more than birth to make a man, and the supposition so long indulged in, that noble descent was alone sufficient to warrant pride and give one the right to demand that his wishes be respected at any cost, was now losing ground, and drawing down upon itself the scorn and ridicule which necessarily come with the growing spirit of democracy.

Le Glorieux of Destouches, presented in 1732 is in its entirety a satire on this idea of birth as an excuse sufficient to pardon all the arrogance of nobility. The count, who is "le glorieux" and the principle character of the play, has nothing but his name and rank to qualify him for the marriage which he is seeking to bring about with the daughter of a wealthy bourgeois. He tries thruout the play to defend his pride in his noble rank, while the other characters are constantly deriding him for this trait which belittles him in the estimation of all, and puts him in many positions in which he is made ridiculous.[1] He feels himself far superior to those of even noble birth, and this causes him to scorn as a rival Philinte who comes from a family slightly less aristocratic than his own.[2] Philinte very modest and reserved, scarcely daring to hope that his attentions may be received favorably, is drawn in sharp contrast to the haughty count who

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1. Destouches. Le Glorieux. Act 3, Scs. 3, 4, 5.
2. Ibid. Act 3, Sc. 7.

does not hesitate to sound his own merits and to make his demands of all concerned. The Count's father has lost all his wealth and as a poor man is also a humble one, and he regrets very deeply his son's attitude. When told by the servant of his son's haughty nature he says:

"O détestable orgueil! Non, il n'est point de vice
Plus funeste aux mortels, plus digne de supplice.
Voulant tout asservir à ses injustes droits,
De l'humanité même il étouffe la voix." [1]

Finally when the father, in order to humble his son, discloses his identity and announces that the maid Lisette is also his child and the Count's sister, the latter realizes that his deceit and pride have only done him harm and says in his last speech:

"Non, je n'aspire plus qu' à triompher de moi;
Du respect, de l'amour, je veux suivre la loi.
Ils m' ont ouvert les yeux; qu' ils m' aident
à me vaincre;
Et je sens que la gloire et la présomption
N' attirent que la haine et l'indignation."[2]

Altho as the play now stands the "glorieux" is only humbled and all turns out to his satisfaction in the end, as Destouches first wrote the play this was not the case, but the Count was punished. It would thus have had a greater moral and dramatic effect upon the audience, but Destouches ceded to

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1. Destouches. Le Glorieux. Act 4, Sc. 3.
2. Ibid. Act 5, Sc. 6.

the self-love of the actor who was to play the part of the count who refused to play it if he was humiliated at the end of the piece, and changed its ending.[1] It was more democratic as first written, but even in its final form we realize that it must have been quite a blow to the supporters of the aristocracy.

La Fausse Agnès by Destouches, played in 1759, is directed against the affected speech and actions of high society. The flattering speech and assumed politeness and gallantry which was very common among the aristocratic class, is here doubtless exaggerated, in order to draw ridicule upon it, but it nevertheless gives us a fairly accurate estimate of the amount of sham and deceit which was practised among this class of people. Everything is done with a selfish motive on the part of the doer, and with the hope that he may derive some personal reward or advantage. The conversation indulged in by all is most trifling and absurd.

Le Philosophe Marié by the same author, and produced in 1727, pictures to us a philosopher, Ariste, who has married a charming wife, but one who is of lower birth than himself. For fear of ridicule on the part of his friends, before whom, as a philosopher, he has alway scoffed at marriage, he hesitates to acknowledge that he has himself entered into such a relationship. Moreover the fear of the anger of his noble and wealthy uncle, whose riches he expects some day to inherit, and whom, as he believes, would disinherit him should

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1. Note at end of Le Glorieux. Ed. of Auteurs Comiques Vol. 4.

he learn the truth, so fills him with apprehension that he endeavors to keep his marriage a secret. But with the fact known to three women, his wife, sister-in-law, and the servant, his attempt is useless and the marriage is at last disclosed, just at the time that his uncle is planning to marry him to another lady. When the philosopher discovers that the truth is sure to be let out, and that his friend the marquis, who has been seeking the hand of his own wife Mélite, has found out that she is married and speaks to Ariste in raillery of the man who is ashamed to confess himself her husband, he desires to flee and thus escape all disgrace which he fears may be the consequence of his actions. But when he discovers that it is too late to take such a cowardly step, and when he is encouraged by his friend Damon, he finally stands up like a man and defends his marriage and the merits of his wife. She, by her gentleness, wins the heart of the uncle, altho he has now promised his fortune to the husband-to-be of his step-daughter. The marquis who has been the friend and rival of Ariste, is to be this husband, but he returns this inheritance to the rightful heir. So, as we have seen, the philosopher's false pride was overthrown and he is proud to acknowledge as his wife, this girl who was of inferior rank.

In Le Philosophe Marié we have one of the earliest recognitions in the drama of the injustice done to women in the matter of marriage relations, as they had been previously regarded, and which were still prevalent in large degree at the time that this work was written. Destouches here attacks the

idea so largely adhered to, namely, that it was a disgrace for a man to love his wife or to show by even the slightest attentions that he respected or cared for her. It was thought a woman's place to suffer the appearance of indifference or even infidelity without complaint, and to be loving and obedient in spite of such treatment. Marriages were often made secretly, and when the husband refused to acknowledge the marriage, it often fell to the lot of the woman to suffer much embarrassment and often even shame.

This condition of affairs together with other problems of domestic life, are the themes upon which almost all of the comédies-larmoyantes are based, those dramas which were so influential in bringing about higher and nobler ideals of married and home life.

In the play mentioned above, Ariste, the philosopher, forbids the servant girl to call her mistress madame, or to divulge in any manner the fact that she is his wife. Whereupon she answers him thus:

"J'enrage, à vous ouir
On s'imaginerait que c'est faire un grand crime
De donner à madame un titre légitime."[1]

Ariste himself recognizes his fault and confesses it to his friend in this passage:

"Entre nous, ma faiblesse
Est de rougir d'un titre et vénérable et doux,
D'un titre autorisé, du beau titre d'époux,
Qui me fait tressailler lorsque je l'articule,
Et que les moeurs du temps ont rendu ridicule."[2]

1. Destouches. Le Philosophe Marié. Act 1, Sc. 3.
2. Ibid. Act 1, Sc. 2.

The whole play serves to show that Ariste gained nothing in attempting to hide his marriage and shield himself from ridicule and his uncle's anger, but on the other hand the very fact that he lacked the courage and independence to stand up for his rights, came near being for him a cause of sorrow and regret. When he finally confesses that he has married for love, all turns out satisfactorily for him.

In Le Préjugé à la Mode written by Nivelle de la Chaussée and put on the stage in 1735, we have a drame whose name is taken from this prejudice of which we have been speaking in discussing the preceding play. The prejudice which forms the subject of the play is the consideration that it is below a man's dignity to show affection and fidelity for his wife. The play is a satire on this prejudice. The relatives and friends of Sophie are trying to persuade her to marry her suitor Damon, but she having seen the sorrow and disappointment of her relative and friend Constance who has been married but a short time, and whose husband has grown indifferent and unfaithful according to the custom of the day, refuses to be led into this state, herself. She sums up very well in her refusal to marry Damon, the attitude of those who scoffed at the sanctity of marriage, by saying:

"Je remarque aujourd'hui qu'il n'est plus de bon air
D'aimer une compagne à qui l'on associe.
Cet usage n'est plus que chez la bourgeoisie:
Mais ailleurs on a fait de l'amour conjugal
Un parfait ridicule, un travers sans égal.
Un époux à présent n'ose plus le paraître;

On lui reprocherait tout ce qu'il voudrait être.
Il faut qu'il sacrifie au préjugé cruel
Les plaisirs d'u amour permis et mutuel,
En vain il est épris d'une épouse qui l'aime;
La mode le subjugue en dépit de lui-même,
Et le réduit bientôt à la nécessité
De passer de la honte à l'infidélité."[1]

When Constance tells Sophie that her husband esteems her, the latter replies:

"Vous vous contentez là d'un bien faible retour!
L'estime d'un époux doit être de l'amour:
Oui, ce sentiment-là renferme tous les autres.
Quoi! les hommes ont-ils d'autres droits que les nôtres?
Se contenteraient-ils de n'être qu'estimés?
Tout perfides qu'ils sont, ils veulent être aimés."[2]

The husband finally realizes that he is really in love with his wife, but he has not yet the courage to confess it to the world. He says to his friend Damon:

"Malgré tout cet amour dont je t'ai rendu compte,
Je me sens retenu par une fausse honte.
Un préjugé, fatal au bonheur des époux,
Me force à lui cacher un triomphe si doux.
Je sens le ridicule où cet amour m'expose."[3]

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1. La Chaussée. Le Préjugé à la Mode. Act 1, Sc. 4.

2. Ibid. Act 1, Sc. 6.

3. Ibid. Act 2, Sc. 1.

His friend chides him for his lack of moral courage and tries to persuade him to acknowledge his affection for his wife, but at first he is so far under the influence of custom that he can not bring himself to do it; but after considerable persuasion upon the part of Damon, and having proved the faithfulness of his wife, he at last confesses that he loves her, in the following speech:

"Oui, je ne prétends plus que personne l'ignore,
C'est ma femme, en un mot, c'est elle que j'adore.
Que l'on m'approuve ou non, mon bonheur me suffit.
Peut-être mon exemple aura plus de crédit:
On pourra m'imiter. Non, il n'est pas possible
Qu'un préjugé si faux soit toujours invincible."[1]

A later work by La Chaussee, Mélanide which appeared in 1841, and which is said in La Grande Larousse to be the chief work in the genre of the comédie-larmoyante,[2] deals with the problem of marriage and family relations and leads one to behold what an evil existed in these relations due to the attitude taken by the aristocratic class, which had permeated all society. D'Orvigny and Mélanide forbidden to marry by their parents, have become husband and wife under oath. But soon after Melanide disappeared; the marquis searched vainly, then seventeen years later falls in love with a young girl, Rosalie, who prefers a young man named Darviane

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1. La Chaussée. Le Préjugé à la Mode. Act 5, Sc. 6.

2. La Grande Larousse. Mélanide. p. 1038. Vol. 5.

who is stopping at the home of Dorisée the mother of Rosalie, accompanied by a lady whom he believes to be his aunt, but who is really his mother, and no other than Mélanide. D'Orvigny and Mélanide have not yet met at the home of Dorisee. Darviane finds himself a rival of his father and provokes him. A common friend reveals to the marquis that Melanide still lives, but it is too late, D'Orvigny is engrossed in his new love. But the sight of his son touches him; Melanide has now only to appear in order that he recognize his wife and see in Rosalie only a wife for his son.

Le Méchant, Gresset's principal work follows along this same general channel. The plot in brief is as follows: Géronte lives in his chateau with his sister Florise and his niece Chloé. He awaits the coming of Valère who is to marry Chloé, his childhood friend. Géronte has as a guest Cléon (le méchant), who wishes to marry either Florise or Chloe in order that he may claim a right over the property of Géronte, and who sets at variance all the occupants of the chateau in bearing slanderous tales among them. Valère, a young mad-cap who takes Cléon as his model and desires to break his marriage in order to remain at Paris, renders himself insupportable to Géronte by his foolish airs. But at the sight of Chloé he soon relents. The prudence of Ariste, the friend of Géronte, and the schemes of the servant Lisette, bring to naught the evil plans of the méchant. Valère breaks with him. Florise who thinks herself loved is soon disabused, Géronte himself ends by being enlightened concerning Cléon and

dismisses him, and Valère marries Chloé. We here have pictured the discord and unhappiness that may be caused in a family through the influence of one selfish and unscrupulous person, and it gives the audience a feeling of desire that all people of such influence might come to a similar fate.

We have yet to consider in this connection, two prose dramas by Diderot one of the most important authors of the comédie-larmoyante. These are Le Fils Naturel and Le Père du Famille, printed in the years 1757 and 1758 respectively, but played much later. Le Père de Famille is another story of the injustice and unhappiness caused by the prejudice of birth. A father has been left a widower with two children, Saint-Albin and Cécile, whom he loves tenderly and who merit his love. Saint-Albin falls in love with Sophie, a poor but honest girl, whom he wishes to marry. But the prejudices of the world will not permit this union, and these prejudices are represented by a commander, uncle of Saint-Albin, who threatens to disinherit him in case he persists in his project of marriage. The father, hoping to conserve the heritage for Saint-Albin, also opposes the marriage, and speaking to the young girl, makes her promise to renounce her love. She consents to this sacrifice but her promise is not sufficient for the commander, who has her shut up as a prostitute. Saint-Albin curses human hypocrisy and renounces his father, uncle, and sister.

This piece is not only a plea against the prejudice of birth, but one as well against the injustices done many times to girls in order to prevent a marriage which the young

man's relatives may not think suitable for him.

Le Fils Naturel presents the near tragic situation, caused by the lack of proper family relations, by a brother's and sister's ignorance of their relationship. Dorval is loved by the sister of his friend Clairville, Constance, who confesses her love to him. He loves Rosalie, fiancee of Clairville, who returns his love. But he blushes at his feelings and makes Rosalie understand that they must not destroy Clairville's happiness. They renounce each other. Soon, at the same time that Rosalie finds her father again, he recognizes in Dorval a naturel son. Clairville marries Rosalie and Dorval becomes the husband of Constance.

Altho both of these last mentioned plays are too full of sensibility to be enjoyed in this day and age of the world, yet they serve to illustrate the point that such things are now being regarded in the light of their seriousness and danger, and in the drama were being presented to the public for reflection.

Lenient in his La Comédie en France au 18^{e} siècle in speaking of Diderot in this connection says: "He has seen there, (meaning the theatre) not without reason, a powerful means of action and of philosophic propaganda. He had the democratic understanding, both thru the conception of the theatre itself as he considers it, and thru the ideas which he expresses there. The Fils Naturel and the Père de Famille are a double attack in precept, against the prejudices of birth and fortune."[1]

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1. Lenient. La Comédie en France au 18^{e} siècle. Vol. I. pp. 320-321.

We have yet to consider at some length in regard to the prejudice of honor and the recognition of rights and realization of duties of the members of the family one toward another, perhaps the most important and certainly the most lasting of any of the dramas of this kind written during the century. I refer to Sedaine's masterpiece Le Philosophe sans le Savoir, played in 1765. The plot in brief is as follows. An honest bourgeois, Va derk, is preparing to celebrate the marriage of his daughter, when, in the morning, he surprises his son, who with pistols in his hand is going, furtively, to a duel. The father, gentle in spite of the, to him, false prejudice of honor, understands that he cannot prevent his son from fighting. However, Antoine, Vanderk's man of confidence, and his daughter Victorine who loves the young man, suspicion why their young master is absent. The old Antoine goes to the place of combat, but at the moment of the shooting he closes his eyes, and thinking he sees his master fall, he goes home and tells Vanderk. The father and the tender Victorine are desolate, when the young man returns and explains things to them.

The father in speaking of the duel as a means of settling a difficulty, strikes a hard blow at this old custom when he says:

"Ah ciel! Fouler aux pieds la raison, la nature, et les lois! Préjugé funeste! Abus cruel du point d'honneur! tu ne pouvais avoir pris naissance que dans les temps les plus barbares; tu ne pouvais subsister qu'au milieu d'une nation vaine et pleine d'elle-même, qu au milieu d'un peuple dont

chaque particulier compte sa personne pour tout, et sa patrie et sa famille pour rien."[1]

Vanderk who had formerly been a noble but who had given up all pretentions to nobility and become a merchant, talks to his son in a very interesting manner concerning birth and the respectibility of commerce and other professions. He informs his son that he was formerly a baron, but due to participation in a duel was forced to flee from France, and later took both the name and trade of his Dutch benefactor. The son considers it a disgrace that his father has thus, as he believes, lowered himself to the extent of becoming a tradesman, which at this time was considered beneath the gentleman, and which he calls an "état." The father answers. "Quel état, mon fils que celui d'un homme qui, d'un trait de plume, se fait obéir d'un bout de l'univers à l'autre!"[2] The son asks what this man of the world can claim of respectability, and M. Vanderk replies: "Ce qui légitime dans un gentilhomme les droits de la naissance, ce qui fait la base de ses titres: la droiture, l'honneur, la probité."[3] The son then asks about the gentleman and the military man, and the father says: "Je ne connais que deux états au-dessus du commerçant (en supposant encore qu'il y ait quelque différence entre ceux qui font le mieux qu'ils peuvent dans le rang où le ciel les a placés); je ne connais que deux états; de magistrat qui fait les lois, et le

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1. Sedaine. Le Philosophe sans le savoir. Act 3, Sc. 8.
2. Ibid. Act 2, Sc. 4.
3. Ibid.

guerrier qui défend la patrie."[1]

He does not even mention the possibility of the nobleman being considered as worthy to take his place beside the men of these three estimable professions, namely, the merchant, the magistrate and the soldier. On the other hand he intimates very clearly that he considers the indolent noble a detriment to his country rather than an advantage.

We have in this speech last cited the praise of not only the merchant and judicial classes but also of the military class, which up to this time had sometimes been regarded as engaged in an inferior profession.

In Nanine acted as early as 1749 we have one of the earliest instances of the mention of soldiers as a respectable class. When the old peasant announces himself to be Nanine's father, but says he has concealed the fact in order to shield her from the shame of having to pass as a soldier's daughter, the following conversation ensues:

La Marquise.

"Pourquoi cela? Pour moi, je considère
Les bons soldats; on a grand besoin d'eux.

Le Comte.

Qu' a ce métiér, s'il vous plaît, de honteux?

Le Paysan.

Il est bien moins honoré qu' honorable.

Le Comte.

Ce préjugé fût toujours condamnable
J'estime plus un vertueux soldat,
Qui de son sang sert son prince et l'Etat.

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1. Le Philosophe sans le Savoir. Act 2, Sc. 4.

Qu' un important, que sa lâche industrie
Engraisse en paix du sang de la patrie."[1]

We notice here, moreover, that this laudation comes not from those of low rank, but from those of titled station, which fact adds weight to its importance.

In the Deux Amis by Beaumarchais, we have again the praise of the merchant and financier. The play receives its name from the two model friends represented there, whose devotion to each other is heroic. Their fidelity and spirit of sacrifice leads each to abandon his fortune in order to save the other. It is significant that these two perfect friends were taken from the merchant class where it would not be impossible to suppose them at this time, rather than from the nobility where no one would expect to find such unselfishness. Aurelly, one of the two friends, who has just had a noble title conferred upon him, still does not intend to give up his old profession, and in attempting to show in the merchant the true benefactor of all those about him, and of the state itself, says: "Messieurs, tout l'or que la guerre disperse, que la fait rentrer à la paix? Qui osera disputer au commerce l'honneur de rendre à l'État epuise le nerf et les richesses qu'il n'a plus? Tous les citoyens sentent l'importance de cette tâche: le négociant seul la remplit. Au moment que le guerrier se repose, le négociant a l'honneur d'être à son tour l'homme de la patrie."

Other dramas of the century which are of more or less importance in a consideration of the growth of a liberalistic attitude toward matters and relations social, but which we have

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1. Voltaire. Nanine. Act 3, Sc. 6.

not time to discuss in detail here, are: Le Partie de Chasse de Henri IV, by Collé, and Mercier's La Brouette du Vinaigrier. Both of these comedies are very democratic. The former describes Henry IV as going hunting with his noble retinue, and of his getting separated from his companions in the woods. He meets an old peasant who takes the king to his humble home, not knowing that he is the king, and here he receives the most common treatment imaginable, all of which the king seems to enjoy very much.

La Brouette du Vinagrier is the story of a noble, who has failed and gone bankrupt, marrying his daughter to his clerk, whose father, in turn, has grown wealthy as a merchant. The last scene, in which the clerk's father comes wheeling in a vinegar barrel filled with money, to serve as an offset to the girl's birth, is quite farcical. This play had a tremendous vogue all over France and Europe generally.

Others which should also be mentioned here include two comedies by Beaumarchais, both of which are of the weepy bourgeois type. Eugénie which dates from 1767 is the story of the seduction of a young girl by a count, who pretends to marry her, but deserts her to marry a wealthy girl. He returns later, full of remorse, and receives forgiveness. La Mère Conpable appeared in 1792, and is concerned with the question of the parents relations to their children. The father and mother in this play are each guilty of trying to advance one child to the disadvantage of the other, but the mistake is discovered and the children are happily reunited. Let us add here also La Harpe's Mélanie printed in 1770, altho

not played until 1791, which as L'École des Mères by La Chaussée, is a protest against the cruelty and inequality of condemning a girl to the convent and giving all the inheritance to the brother. The father says in this connection: "L'égalité, c'est la loi de nature." Also, Saurin's Béverlei, 1768, which is an adaptation of the English play The Gamester by Moore. It relates the terrible effect upon family life and society generally, of the sin of gambling. A comparison of this serious play by Saurin with Regnard's frivolous play Le Joueur, 1698, shows most interestingly how great has been the change in the treatment of such a theme in drama during the century.

II. Liberalism in Religion and Politics.

The struggle in France for tolerance in religion, and reform in politics and law, which came to a head and found its ultimate expression in the Revolution, was championed and forwarded during the last half of the 18th century by the work of a number of dramatic authors. These three fields, the religious, political and judicial, were rather closely connected in this fight for toleration and justice. Most of the dramatic works which were written with the desire to further the cause of religious liberty, were almost necessarily forced to advocate a change in laws and political administration, in order that their foremost purpose might be accomplished. Since at this time in France there was a readiness to sacrifice an individual to any popular cause or even prejudice, without regard to facts, as long as the end obtained seemed desirable, it was becoming pertinent that men of strong moral courage should take their stand on the side of the oppressed and use all their eloquence and power to bring about a change in existing conditions. Altho the dramatic works which exerted an influence for reform are largely in the field of tragedy, a field into which my study in connection with the growth of liberalism has gone but slightly, I desire to give here at

least some small idea as to how this movement was forwarded by the dramatic writers of the period.

We must here keep in mind in considering this manifestation of liberalism, the fact before mentioned that the dramatic productions had to pass a rather rigid censorship before being allowed to be played on the stage, and that those in which a too evident tendency toward democracy was suspected, were suppressed and forbidden to be staged. Especially was this the case in Paris and other large cities, while many of the provincial towns were quite lenient. Consequently, many authors refused permission to present their works in large cities, took them to the provinces and played them. Oftentimes a play was censured even after it had been produced several times.

As an example of the difficulty thus encountered, let us mention the Mariage de Figaro by Beaumarchais. This play, tho ready for presentation in 1780, took four years of constant effort on the part of its author and his friends, in order to overcome the opposition of the authorities which in this case included even the king.[1]

Under these conditions authors were forced to disguise and conceal as much as possible the true objects of their ridicule, and their democratic views. However, many attacks on the church and on laws and government were passed over by the censors, due partly, perhaps, to their recognition of the tendency of the time in regard to liberality

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1. Hallays. Censure Théâtrale en France. pp. 127-132.

and their lack of inclination or courage to condemn everything which smacked of that flavor, but due more often to their failure to recognize the degree to which these productions were a protest directed against existing institutions.

About the earliest really direct reference to the lack of justice of the law courts which I have noted, is found in LeSage's Crispin Rival de son Maître. In talking about a law-suit which has been taking place, M. Oronte says: "Ma foi, cette affaire lui a bien coûte de l'argent, n'est-ce-pas?" Crispin answers: "Je vous en reponds! mais la justice est une si belle chose, qu'on ne saurait trop cher l'acheter."[1]

Le Philosophe sans le Savoir, 1765, strikes a note of protest against the laws concerning duelling. When M. Vanderk is lamenting the existence of such a barbarous institution as a means of vindicating one's sense of honor, ends by saying: "Et vous, lois sages, mais insuffisantes, vous avez désiré mettre un frein à l'honneur: vous avez ennobli l'échafaud; votre sévérité cruelle n'a servi qu'à froisser le coeur d'un honnête homme entre l'infamie et le supplice."[2] The author was not here trying to justify the institution, as it was believed by many at the time this play was produced, but he was rather protesting against the laws then being enforced against duelling which were as bad as the practice of duelling itself, and had failed of their purpose.

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1. Le Sage. Crispin Rival de son Maître. Sc. 9.

2. Sedaine. Le Philosophe sans le Savoir. Act 3, Sc. 8.

Le Mariage de Figaro which was written in 1779, altho, as has been said, was not played until five years later, is thruout a protest against the laws and customs of the reign of Louis XVI. The exceptional interest of this celebrated piece rests especially in the audacity and social reach of the satire. In a Spanish frame it is at bottom a charge against the nobility and magistracy of France. Louis XVI judged it too dangerous to be publicly represented. "Il faudrait, dit le roi après en avoir entendu la lecture, que d'abord la Bastille fût renversée!"[1]

Let us cite from this play one example of the manner in which Beaumarchais presented his charge. Marceline, the mother of Figaro and an outcast, blames the laws and the courts for her condition and that of many other unfortunate women. In speaking of the judges and of men in general, she says: "Vous et vos magistrats si vains du droit de nous juger, et qui nous laissent enlever, par leur coupable négligence, tout honnête moyen de subsister! Est-il un seul état pour les mal-heureuses filles?"[2] This sounds a very earnest plea for badly needed laws in regard to moral conduct.

Voltaire was doubtless the man in the 18th century who exerted the greatest influence toward tolerance and liberalism both in his dramatic writings and in other fields as well. There is a very interesting editorial on Voltaire in the New York Evening Post for December 3rd, 1898, which gives a good

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1. Larousse. Vol. 5, p. 934.
2. Mariage de Figaro. Act. 3, Sc. 16.

idea of his great efforts and untiring labor for the cause of right, and part of this editorial I shall quote here: "Voltaire was a law-reformer. He struggles with great ardor to pierce the thick hide of French feudalism and bigotry with ideas of common sense and toleration, and to introduce modern science in the making, giving and execution of the law. The Calas case was not the only one which brot his scathing sarcasm and furious passion of humanity into the field for the righting of wrong and the blasting of cruelty and oppression. Hardly a week passed from 1765 until his death when he was not engaged in gibbeting unjust judges or in saving innocence from robbery or torture. Among the cases which he took up was one known as the Meprise d'Arras, where a respectable father of a family was accused of a murder near his house, without a particle of probability. He was sentenced without evidence. Another case was the Montbailli case. A young married couple lived with the husband's mother, who when drunk fell and cut her head and later died. After she was buried some gossips said she had been murdered. The case was twice tried, and finally the judges in order to quiet the clamor sentenced both to be burned. The husband was killed, but Voltaire got ahold of the case and prevented the wife's death. In other cases, as that of the Chevalier de la Barre he was not in time to prevent the tragedy, but it became, in his hands, a weapon before which bigoted priests and rascally judges trembled and slunk into obscurity. Voltaire went beyond the concrete horrors of the courts and tried to show the French lawyers that the root of all their iniquities was their want of legal rules of

evidence. In the absence of such rules questions of innocence or guilt were settled by the impressions or prejudices of the judges, and there was no way of compelling the judges to justify them. The people saw no absurdity in having men, on their word of honor, say a man was guilty, as happened in the Dreyfus case. Voltaire wrote many papers on the administration of justice, on proof, on crime and punishment, and on tolerance, which are wonderful productions considering the time at which they were written."[1]

Let us now notice a few of Voltaire's tragedies which are concerned with the theme of religious toleration. Zaire, presented in 1732, was for a long time considered by the priests and all of the Catholic Church, as a Christian tragedy, following the demands of the orthodox church. Consequently it was often played. This tragedy has in it, to be sure, a Christian element which conformed to the orthodox view, and this fact hid from the eyes of the Catholic supporters the presence there likewise of an element of toleration.

The Sarasin prince, tho a mussulman, and an infidel in the eyes of the Catholics, is upheld as an example to the Christians, because of his ability to rise above the hates of race and religion, and his spirit of brotherly kindness in pardoning his enemies and breaking the bonds of his prisoners. Zaire has no other God than this prince Arosmane, and consents to become a Christian less thru conviction than

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1. New York Evening Post. Dec. 3, 1898.

thru a sense of duty. From the first she professes the most liberal opinions, and all cults seem to be of equal value in her eyes.

"La coutume, la loi plia mes premiers ans
A la religion des heureux musulmans.
Je le vois trop: les soins qu'on prend de notre enfance.
Forment nos sentiments, nos moeurs, notre croyance.
J'eusse été près du Gange esclave des faux dieux,
Chrétienne dans Paris, musulmane en ces lieux."[1]

Altho Zaire finally becomes a Christian when begged to do so by her father, she is never convinced that this religion is the only true one, and is never really converted.

Alzire, 1736, was also considered as a Christian work. Alvarez, the priest, as here represented is pious, but he is also tolerant. He brands with an indignant eloquence the cruelties committed in America by the Spaniards. He states that his God is a God of peace, and says that the barbarians are not alone in their cruelty. He denounces forced conversions such as France at one time had tried to effect when he says:

"Les coeurs opprimes ne sont jamais soumis.
J'en ai gagné plus d'un, je n'ai forcé personne,
Et le vrai Dieu mons fils, est le Dieu qui pardonne."[2]

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1. Zaire. Act 1, Sc. 1.
2. Alzire. Act 1, Sc. 1.

According to him the duty of a true Christian is to regard all men as brothers, to do good, and to pardon wrong. He adds that those who persecute the unfortunate Peruviens, in the name of heaven, are bad Christians. Thus in his so-called most religious play, Voltaire has yet introduced a lesson of tolerance.

Les Guèbres one of Voltaire's most tolerant plays, was never represented. The entire tragedy is a sermon on the liberty of conscience. The plot briefly, is as follows: The high priest tries to have a young girl Arzame punished for her religion. The commander of the Roman army saves her from being persecuted and in trying to aid her to escape is himself involved in serious difficulty. Finally the high priest is killed and the emperor pardons the two officers who were trying to effect the escape of Arzame and her lover, who turn out to be the children of these same two officers.

Persecution is here presented in all its horrors. One sees paganism, the official cult, and the religion of the state, all making war upon the gentle, simple, almost rational belief of the Guèbres. The latter, humble, submissive, virtuous and excellent citizens, ask only to be able to live in peace.[1]

"Hélas! pour adorer le Dieu de mes ancêtres.
Il me faut donc mourir par la main de vos prêtres!"[2]

No detail is neglected in order to render intolerance most odious. The last two speeches of the emperor contains much that is a direct protest against persecution and intolerance, some of which is here quoted:

1. L. Fontaine. Le Théâtre et la Philosophie au 18e siècle. p.76.
2. Les Guèbres. Act 1, Sc. 5.

"Dans un culte interdit par une lois sévère
Vous avez élevé la soeur avec le frère;
C'est la première source où de tout de fureurs
Ce jour a vu puiser ce vaste amas d'horreurs:
Des prêtres, emportés par un funeste zèle,
Sur une faible enfant ont mis leur main cruelle;
Ils auraient dû l'instruire et non la condamner;
Trop jaloux de leurs droits, qu'ils n'ont pas su borner,
Fiers de servir le ciel, ils servaient leur vengeance.
De ces affreux abus j'ai senti l'importance;
Je les viens abolir."[1]

"Les persécutions
Ont mal servi ma gloire, et font trop de rebelles.
Quand le prince est clément, les sujets sont fideles.
On m'a trompé long-temps; je ne veux désormais
Dans les prêtres des dieux que des hommes de paix
Des ministres chéris, de bonté, de clémence,
Jaloux de leurs devoirs, et non de leur puissance."[2]

Two other dramas which might be mentioned as being prompted by a spirit of toleration are: Laya's Jean Calas and Paméla by Neufchâteau, neither of which texts I have had opportunity to consult. Paméla was represented in the theatre in 1793, and was a laudation of the English government, but still more a campaign of the author against the spirit of perse-

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1. Voltaire. Les Guèbres. Act 5, Sc. 6.

2. Ibid.

cution. In this play is found the following couplet, as given by D'Estrée in Le Théâtre sous la Terreur.

"Ah! les persécuteurs sont les plus condamnables
Et les plus tolérants sont les plus pardonnables."[1]

Political dramas which were written between the years 1789-1795, after the fall of the Bastile, seem to have been quite numerous, but comparatively few of them were ever allowed to be presented, and even those which passed the censure were often suspended after they had been played a few times and the effect on the public was observed. We shall note here a few of the principal ones of this revolutionary group of dramas. First we have two of this type by Chenier. His Charles IX or L'École des Rois was played in 1789. The subject of this piece is the massacre of Saint-Barthélemy, and it is directed especially against royalty. Here the public saw on the scene a king ordering the massacre of his people. This drama was suppressed after it had been presented a number of times. The other work by the same author is Jean Calas which is political as well as religious. A work of similar nature to the one last mentioned is one of the same title, by Laya. "In both these dramas in the scene of deliberation[2] we see the vain efforts of a humane judge against the combined force of his colleagues decided to condemn under the pressure of popular hate".[3]

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1. P. Estree. La Théâtre sous la Terreur. p. 427.

3. Gaiffe. Le Drame en France au 18e siècle. p. 377.

2. Laya. Jean Calas. Act 3, Scs. 5 and 9.
Chenier. Jean Calas. Act 2, Sc. 3.

Here we have a picture of the condition of the magistrate as found in Chenier.

"Dans les tribunaux, comme au sein des combats,
Un mortel s'accoutume a l'aspect du trépas,
Et se croyant toujours entouré de coupables,
Voit couler d'un oeil sec le sang de ses semblables.
Ces grands tribaunaux, rivaux du despotisme,
Affectent son orgueil, ainsi que sa fureur:
Avant de s'avouer convaincus d'une erreur,
Ils laisseront traîner l'innocent au supplice;
Après sa mort peut-être ils lui rendront justice:
Tel est des parlements l'esprit accoutumé.
Ainsi le magistrat que l'or seul a nommé,
Croyant s'humilier s'il devenait sensible,
Achète et vend le droit de paraître infallible."[1]

L'Ami des Lois, a protest against despotism, also by Laya must be given a place here, and LaChaste Suzanne by Radet and Desfontaines, directed against the court system. In this connection it is necessary to recall again the two most important plays of Beaumarchais, Le Barbier de Seville and Le Mariage de Figaro, the latter being thruout a satire of the French courts.

Thus we know, that altho those in power were trying to prevent the spread of the growing feeling of revolution and democracy in both religion and politics, it was neverthe-

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1. Chenier. Jean Calas. Act 3, Sc. 4. Taken from Gaiffe - Le Drame en France au 18e siecle. pp. 377-378.

less rapidly gaining ground and was being demonstrated in many ways, one of the most important of which was the theatre.

Considering then, the material which we have been able to consult on the 18th century in France, we may say without question that the drama of this century was indeed a mirror of the spirit of liberalism as it was being developed among all classes, during this period. It is a mirror of the growth of this spirit in all the directions which it took, including in its scope the social, religious, political and judicial phenomena. Beginning with the light and often trivial comedies of Regnard and Dancourt, in which we find only an occasional touch of the spirit of democracy, liberalism develops steadily tho often haltingly, thru the dramas of such authors as Voltaire and Sedaine to the works of Mercier and Beaumarchais. The plays of these latter men serve not only as a mirror of what has been taking place in the field of democratic advancement, but even go beyond this and serve also as a means of propaganda for the still greater reform and liberalism which is to come with the Revolution.

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